THE
Dan Smoot Report

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DAN SMOOT

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

In my published *Reports* and in my broadcasts every week, I use American constitutional principles as the yardstick for measuring the political, social, and economic problems of our time. Hence, I set aside one *Report* each year in which I reaffirm my faith in these principles: restate my own conclusions about the origins of the great American ideal.

As I see it, the beginning of the United States of America was the most dramatic and significant episode in a long pilgrimage — the pilgrimage of the Christian idea of law, liberty, self-government. Christianity is the master principle of our organic documents of government — the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Neither Paul nor any of the other early Christians had any particular interest in social reform or political revolution. Their dedication was spiritual; yet, at the core of Christian faith is the most revolutionary idea ever conceived: that individual man is infinitely important. Individual man is imperfect, yet God so loved him that He sent His only begotten Son to save him from sin.

After that basic Christian idea had worked for centuries in the finite minds of men, it led to an obvious conclusion: individual man, the object of such infinite grace and mercy, is the most important creature on earth. This is the origin of the basic American *political* ideal: that man gets all his rights and powers from God, the Creator; that government is weaker and less important than man, because government was created *by man.*

The beginnings of America were Christian.

Most of our organic documents of government give recognition to God.

While the *Mayflower* rode at anchor in Provincetown Harbor, near Christmastime, 1620, the Pilgrims aboard decided to form a government before going ashore in the new world. Hence, they wrote and signed the Mayflower Compact, which begins:

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"In the name of God, amen, we whose names are underwritten . . . having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honor of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic."

In 1787, the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia could reach no agreement on the kind of national government needed — a kind which would bind individual states together in a union for protection against foreign powers and for preventing wars among themselves, while preserving the sovereignty of the states, leaving to the people their God-given rights to govern themselves in their own states, without interference from the national government.

The Constitutional Convention was on the point of breaking up, when Benjamin Franklin gave the delegates a reminder and a warning:

"How has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? . . .

"I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth; that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

"I . . . believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

The Declaration of Independence expresses the essence of Americanism; and the essence of the Declaration is a Christian assumption:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are . . . endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

There were no arguments or committee meetings or panel discussions about it: Simply, we proclaim these things as truth because we know them to be truth! The basic truths of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights can be summarized in a short paragraph:

Government derives its just powers from us, the governed. We want it clearly understood, moreover, that the power we give to government is very limited. Even though we must delegate to government enough power to protect all of us from one another, and from possible foreign enemies, we have certain rights which we are not willing to surrender or modify for any purpose whatever. We call these rights unalienable because God, our Creator, endowed us with them: we consider them sacred. Each of us as an individual, whether rich or poor, weak or strong, has certain rights that God has given him and that no power on earth can legally take away — neither government, nor an organized group, nor an overwhelming majority of the people themselves.

Christian Individualism

The Christian concept of equality (also written into the Declaration of Independence: All men are *created* equal) is not tainted with materialism. Jesus rather impatiently said that the poor are always with us. His concept of equality had nothing to do with man's physical attributes and possessions, or with the general distribution of worldly goods. The teachings of Jesus did not imply mass organization and standardization of people, or worldwide uniformity, or a universal leveling of mankind. They implied the opposite. Jesus taught that men are equal before God, *regardless of their status on earth.*

The Christian concept of equality is spiritual. It has nothing to do with income, health, or environment. It simply gives a little, imperfect man, born in sin, an individual, personal relationship with God — equal to that of any other man on earth. In short, Christianity exalts individualism, stressing the importance and exclusive dependence on God and self of the human individual.

The strength and culture of America, built on faith in Jesus Christ, will start degenerating when Americans no longer hold aloft the central tenet of Christian faith — namely, that the human individual (not the *masses* or *society*, but the *individ-*

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ual) is a divinely important being, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world to make a blood atonement for the sins of individuals.

Socialist Togetherness

The strength and culture of communism-socialism-fascism, built on faith in the almighty state, or government, would die if heavily infiltrated with Christian individualism, because the central tenet of communist-socialist-fascist faith is that the individual is nothing; the State (or society, or the masses, or government) is everything.

Could the socialist concept of man as an unimportant unit in a soulless something called *the masses*, win converts among free men? Could materialistic faith in socialism ever have a stronger appeal to free men than Christian faith in the divine importance of individuals?

It has.

The blossoming of socialism occurred in the modern world almost simultaneously with explosively sudden, worldwide developments in the physical sciences. In the new enthusiasm for science, a monkey-like amazement at his own inventive cleverness replaced man's ancient awe for things spiritual. In the twentieth century, the material promises of socialism presented themselves as a new faith and captured some of the most cultivated minds in the Christian world.

The Irrepressible Conflict

After seizing power in Russia, the Bolsheviks discovered that the only way to destroy Christian churches is to infiltrate them so that they will be destroyed gradually, by church people themselves. Reinterpret Scriptures to remove the deity of Christ and convert Him into a socialist. Distort Biblical sermons on charity to prove that government should confiscate property and enforce economic equality. Strain spiritual content out of Scriptures, and religion's hold upon the people can be broken: God then becomes some kind of vague universal force; Jesus becomes merely a great man — a teacher, philosopher, social reformer.

A church establishment built on such notions as these is not an insurmountable obstacle in the path of the socialist revolution. On the contrary, it can become a very useful instrument for promoting socialism.

Thousands of church people have supported hundreds of communist causes; but that is relatively unimportant.

The important question is whether preachers have rejected or corrupted the doctrines of the Christian faith.

The fundamental doctrine of Christianity is that imperfect man can be saved only by the grace of Jesus Christ.

The fundamental doctrine of socialism is that all of man's sins — all evils on earth — result from man's physical environment; that government can create paradise by taking total control of the lives of all the people, legislating away all evils, creating the right environment — regulating, controlling, and redistributing until everyone has an equal share of everything.

It is at this point that preachers who regard themselves as Christian socialists begin to substitute government for God. It is at this point that the social gospel becomes socialism.

Emphasizing material reform, achieved by man himself, with only casual, or no, reference to Salvation by the Grace of God, seems to have left many modern liberal ministers with no confidence in God. They react to problems around them by exerting pressure, in the name of religion, for federal laws to impose their notions of equality and morality on the entire nation. They do not believe in voluntary, individual Christian giving — except to their own churches. They believe in organized political pressures for legislation which will force other people to give. They have become class-conscious political robinhoods: perpetually petitioning government to take money away from one group of citizens for distribution to another group.

Most of the clergymen who have had some connection with communist activities probably got

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into the fronts because they could not tell them from respectable organizations.

There is the danger: the language of modern liberalism is so similar to the language of communism; the root ideas of socialism are so closely akin to contemporary doctrines of the social gospel — that many cannot tell the difference.

If church congregations of America do not become critically conscious of the basic issues involved in the struggle of our times, and do not exert every effort to correct grave errors on the part of the professional and lay leadership of the churches, the great religious institutions will, at best, be nothing better than pleasant social organizations. At worst, they can become dangerous propaganda centers for socialism.

The great struggle of our time is a war to the death between the Christian forces of freedom and the atheistic forces of slavery. It is, therefore, dangerously significant that American Christians will tolerate any gesture on the part of their own church organizations to announce neutrality in this great struggle, or tolerate any friendly fraternizing with the known agents of communism, or tolerate a "brotherhood" brainwash which results in the outlawing of Christian instruction for their children.

Having been reared and educated in the intellectual atmosphere of the twentieth century — an atmosphere laden with the virus of socialism — many church leaders seem never to have learned that the Gospel of Jesus is spiritual. They think it is merely a moral message to help men solve the material problems of human relations. Hence, they easily identify the teachings of Jesus with the socialistic ideal of enforced materialistic equality for the human race. They show more zeal for "brotherhood" and "togetherness" than for the saving grace of our Lord Jesus.

This withering of spirituality and growth of materialism are primary characteristics of the twentieth century.

How Late the Hour?

How late is the hour in the night of our history? Not too late.

Americans are beginning to hunger for spiritual sustenance. Instead of accepting the socialistic credo that man with science and with "scientific political organization" no longer needs God but can lift himself by his own bootstraps, intelligent Americans are beginning to realize that a worship of science and of scientific political organization will create a Frankenstein monster capable of destroying the human race.

People who have for a long time — out of ignorance, or indifference, or something — followed the leadership of misguided men, into a deadend of frustration and doubt and fear, are now beginning to search for the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Hope

It came upon the midnight clear. As the white flocks lay sleeping along the hills of Judea, Christ was born.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them:

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

That is the hope of the world.

This Issue

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